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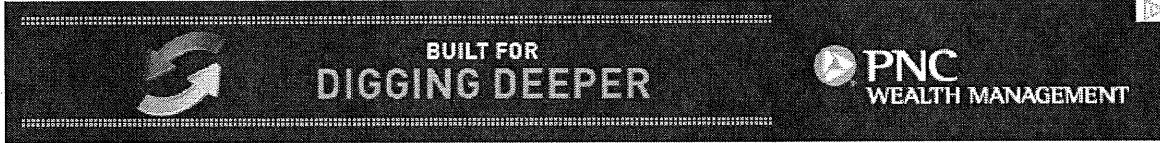
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Prosecutor in Brooklyn Investigates Hospital

By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS
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The Brooklyn district attorney's office has been looking into management practices at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center, a money-losing hospital serving mostly poor patients, several hospital trustees said Wednesday.

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The investigation, which has been going on for several months, is focused on the relationship between hospital officials and a Caribbean medical school in which the officials had a financial stake, the trustees said.

It has also been looking at whether Rajiv Garg, the hospital's chief executive until he was abruptly replaced early last week, had been improperly reimbursed by the hospital for expenses that included a first-class plane ticket to London and a holiday party that he hosted with his wife at the Lambs Club, a fashionable restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, the trustees said.

Several trustees said the district attorney's office had subpoenaed records, including payroll documents and contracts, and had invited various hospital officials into the to talk. But it was unclear Wednesday whether any criminal behavior was suspected, or whether officials had broken hospital rules. A spokesman for Charles J. Hynes, the district attorney, declined to comment.

Wyckoff Heights, in Bushwick, is largely dependent on taxpayer money — government payments from Medicare and Medicaid — to keep it afloat. It is on the brink of financial collapse, and in November a state task force said it should be merged with two other troubled Brooklyn hospitals.

The hospital's board of trustees named Ramon J. Rodriguez, a member of a state task force on Brooklyn hospitals, as an interim replacement for Mr. Garg. The trustees said Mr. Rodriguez moved swiftly to demand the resignations of several people closely associated with Mr. Garg, including Dr. A. C. Rao, the chief of surgery, and Julius Romero, associate vice president for medical education.

The district attorney, one trustee said, was looking into whether Dr. Rao and another doctor had received payments from the Caribbean medical school, Spartan Health Sciences University in St. Lucia, based on the number of Spartan students that the hospital agreed to train during their crucial third year of medical school, a hands-on experience called a clinical clerkship.

Tom Dunn, a spokesman for the State Education Department, said Spartan had not been approved by the department's Office of Professions, and as a result could place students in New York hospitals for no longer than 12 weeks. Mr. Dunn said Spartan had applied for

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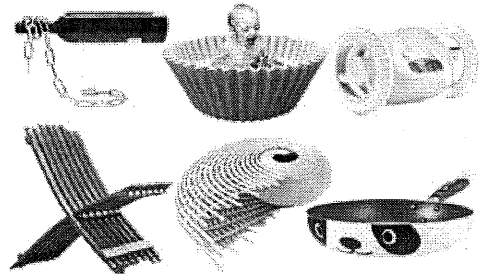
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approval in 2007, and at that time, according to state records, Mr. Garg and Dr. Rao had financial interests in the school. It was unclear whether they still do.

Jonathan Marks, a criminal defense lawyer representing Mr. Garg, denied any wrongdoing on his client's part, and said Mr. Garg had fully disclosed his financial interest in Spartan to the trustees. Mr. Marks said he did not know anything about reimbursed expenses, like a holiday party or a trip to London. The district attorney, he said, "subpoenaed a vast number of documents and it's impossible to divine from what they subpoenaed exactly what they were looking at."

Dr. Rao's wife said he was working late, and could not be reached.

Several trustees spoke about the investigation on condition of anonymity, saying they were not authorized to comment. But one trustee, Vincent Arcuri Jr., a retired construction executive, said that the trustees had not been fully briefed on the investigation, and that the lack of information "has been destroying us."

Mr. Arcuri said that he had not attended the party at the Lambs Club, but that some doctors at the hospital had complained about it. He said the expense, estimated by another trustee at \$14,000, was too small to have come to the attention of the full board.

Mr. Arcuri said Mr. Garg had flown to London for a scientific or medical conference. "It would have been good for us to know about this beforehand, but it wasn't required," he said.

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